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ABSTRACT

An induction system for beginning teachers should provide continued support in the instructional area and also induct the newcomer into the general operational and social milieu of the individual school. The following areas of concern in the process of teacher orientation are discussed: (1) What information is provided regarding the decision making processes in the school, what opportunities are provided to involve them quickly into these processes, and what kind of system is there to provide new teachers with information in this category? (2) What specific procedures are in place to provide information and counseling to beginning teachers about conflicting roles they have as teachers? (3) Is there a system of planning and organized support for the new teacher provided by the principal or another mentor, and to what extent are there systematic attempts to familiarize new teachers with the community? (4) What procedures are there to inform new teachers of the general orientation of the school toward expected outcomes of instruction and teacher accountability? and (5) Is every effort made to assure that beginning teachers are assigned to teach courses where there is a legitimate chance for them to succeed? (JD)

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EVALUATING TEACHER INDUCTION PROCESSES ASSOCIATED WITH THE CONDITIONS OF PRACTICE

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Professionals with interests in teacher preparation have long agonized over the loss of human capital represented by a decision of a seemingly well-prepared first or second year teacher to abandon teaching for another career. Indeed, concern for retention of talented newcomers has been so strong that some teacher educators, at least, believe that one measure of the effectiveness of their preparation programs ought to be the relative propensity of their graduates to stick with the profession once they have met all entry requirements and actually assumed teaching positions in the schools.

There may be a certain surface logic to evaluating preparation programs in terms of their capacities to produce teachers who commit long-term to the profession. Clearly, however, the amount of weight given to this kind of evidence in evaluating the merit of a given program must be reduced by a recognition that variables beyond the control of those managing teacher preparation programs heavily influence the decision of a given individual to remain or not to remain in teaching.

One common thread that runs through decisions of many individuals who think about leaving the profession is a concern for the conditions of practice in their individual schools. The tremendous variety of settings in which teachers work and the divergent expectations placed on teachers in different schools has been widely discussed. The kinds of generic competencies beginning teachers have when they complete their preparation programs may provide them with the tools to render stellar performances in some settings and abysmal performances in others. It is clear that

teacher-preparation program follow-up efforts that do not recognize the influence the individual setting of practice can have on the success or lack of success of a given teacher fail to recognize the diversity of settings within which professional practice takes place.

There is evidence that systematic efforts to help beginning teachers to adjust to the site-specific attributes of their initial settings of practice have been minimal. (Grant, and Zeichner, 1981). As spokespersons for the National Institute of Education have observed, the profession ignores differences in conditions of professional practice at the cost of losing many potentially excellent teachers. Note these comments:

> "The conditions under which a person carries out the first years of teaching have a strong influence on the level of effectiveness which that teacher is able to achieve and sustain over the years; on the attitudes which govern teacher behavior over even a forty-year career; and, indeed, on the decision whether or not to continue in the teaching profession." (National Institute of Education, p. 3.)

Part of beginning teachers' adjustment to the profession relates to their abilities to come to terms with the very special social structure of public education. Basically, schools are conservative places. As Edelfelt (1979) notes, there is a hierarchy, a power structure, built into any school system designed to "protect against or resist radical change." (p. 365). Pair this information with Erlandson's and Pastor's (1981) findings that teachers with the highest potential for success tend to prize such values as "freedom and independence" and "expression of creativity." There appears to be a conflict between public education's basic social structure and values of individuals who might make important contributions as teachers. Given this conflict, many potentially good

teachers fund themselves unable to accomodate to the constraints they view as inherent within the educational system.

The tragedy here is that neither public education nor potentially outstanding teachers are frozen in value positions that are hopelessly at odds. While it is true that public education does not embrace rapid change as a high priority value, the system is responsive to societal pressures. Anycne looking at today's school programs and those of 20 years ago cannot help but be struck by changes in treatment of handicapped youngsters, bilingual children, and athletically-talented females.

Though surveyed beginning teachers of high potential may espouse core values that tend to support free-wheeling personal action and rapid change, in practice such individuals may well tolerate more modest rates of innovation. This seems especially likely under conditions that provide them with opportunities to make substantive contributions to decisions that might lead to eventual, if not immediate, changes. The work of Erlandson and Pastor (1981) reflects that teachers of high potential strongly prize opportunities to have genuine involvement in decisions that relate to their conditions of practice.

The key appears to be a systematic process to introduce new teachers to the nature of the school system and especially to the nature of the decision-making process in a formal way. Newly employed teachers should be made to understand immediately how their views can be incorporated into the decision-making process. Teachers who feel they are part of the decision-making process feel better about themselves. This attitude is likely to make them more inclined to commit to education on a long-term basis and to feel better about themselves.

In addition to being provided opportunities to influence decisions, beginning teachers need to understand that they will be required to balance many competing roles. Experienced teachers have worked out the relationships among the many roles they must play. But, beginners may need some help in this area. Gehrke (1982) in a longitudinal study of beginning teachers' adjustment to the profession has pointed out that new teachers, in particular, have difficulty in striking an appropriate balance between their role as a classroom teacher and their role as a husband or wife. Too much attention to one or the other can result in a feeling that responsibilities in one area are not being adequately attended to. It is not uncommon for beginning teachers to develop heavy feelings of guilt as a result.

Traditionally, beginning teachers have been advised that any feelings of role-related stress they may be experiencing may go away after the first year of teaching is over. But, Gehrke's studies reveal that role conflicts are a persistent feature of teaching, and all teachers must make some accommodations to them throughout their careers. Given this reality, it makes sense to develop systematic procedures to help newcomers to the profession to understand that they are not alone in their frustrations with balancing competing role obligations and to provide them with some insights from more experienced hands who have had to make many difficult role-balancing decisions of their own.

In addition to the challenge of balancing competing role obligations, beginning teachers often reflect shock at the abrupt transition from the supportive environment of student teaching to the apparent indifference to their classroom performance that many sense on the part of building

administrators. Few beginners receive more than one or two classroom visits from principals. For an individual used to weekly visits and feedback from university supervisors and classroom supervising teachers, the absence of continued professional counsel can be distressing. This is all the more true given the isolated nature of instructional practice in most schools. As Erlandson and Pastor (1981) have commented:

> ". . . Teaching is a lonely profession if regular contact with colleagues is the criterion. Most schools are still structured in a way that makes the teacher the only adult in the classroom once the class begins and the door closes." (p.7)

Clearly there is a need for a program to bridge the gap between student teaching and the demands of the first-year of teaching. The program ought to provide continued support in the instructional area but also ought to induct the newcomer into the general operational and social milieu of the individual school. Schemes that call for such practices as experienced teacher mentoring, inservice programs targeted specifically at audiences of beginning teachers, regularly scheduled meetings between new teachers and key administrators, and so forth merit serious consideration.

In addition to those conditions of the professional teaching milieu that tend to characterize the profession in general, there are additional conditions that might be described as site-specific. Among these variables is the specific concept a given school administration or program might have regarding what constitutes good or appropriate instruction. It is clear that an individual who might perform well under one set of program expectations might do very poorly under a different set of expectations.

To illustrate differences in expectations, let us suppose there were three schools. Each had one of the following orientations. (Labels and orientations adapted from Haberman, 1982).

1. Therapeutic/compensatory orientation;
2. Intellectual orientation; and,
3. Life-centered orientation.

Therapeutic/compensatory orientation. In this school, there is an assumption that youngsters have a certain handicap or a deficiency that stands in the way of mastery of content. Objectives of learning are clearly understood by all staff members. Diagnostic activity seeks to identify specific areas of weakness with respect to these objectives. Instruction consists of teacher prescription of direct instruction, reading, working with support equipment, and so forth that is designed to remediate these deficiencies. Teacher creativity exists only within clearly constrained limits. The teacher can modify the program or the mode of delivery for a given youngster. But, the objectives are given.

Creativity and great flexibility are not prized given this orientation. A teacher willing to accept the program structure might well flourish here. Another, unable to commit to the program, might well be perceived as a mediocre teacher.

Intellectual orientation. In this school, the purpose is to provide instruction that encourages youngsters to pursue ideas. Higher-level thinking is prized. There is an emphasis on having youngsters master processes of learning rather than on having them develop total control over a limited body of formal content. Whether a given topic has a practical value may be seen as unimportant. The important thing is the development of thinking skills. The teacher who can prompt youngsters

to develop such skills is likely to receive high marks from administrators in this school. On the other hand, the teacher oriented toward remediating specific content deficiencies might not do well here.

Life-centered orientation. The major thrust of instruction in this school is directed toward breaking down barriers that are thought to stand between the student and the out-of-school world. Teacher practices that feature out-of-school experiences are favored. A teacher skilled in arranging field trips, internships, and teleconferences might receive high ratings from administrators. This kind of "good" teaching would vary markedly from what might be considered worthy performance in schools with either a therapeutic/compensatory orientation or an intellectual orientation.

. . . . .

Differences among individual teacher preparation programs may provide some teachers with perspectives more suited to employment in one kind of school-orientation than in another. There may well be merit in considering the kinds of assumptions being made about the likely setting of practice that are made by the teacher preparation program when efforts are made to evaluate its effectiveness. It may be that a program that would do a splendid job of preparing students to work in life-centered orientations is sending most of its graduates to schools with intellectual orientations where they are having difficulty in adjusting to the norms of acceptable professional behavior. Should this kind of a thing be going on, it might suggest the merit of a careful re-examination of how the program either might direct graduates to schools with orientations more in line with those provided by the program or or how the program, itself, might adjust its own assumptions to parallel more closely those of the settings of practice in which large numbers of graduates are finding initial employment.

Regardless of where new teachers received their preservice preparation, school districts would do well to inform them of the general orientations of the programs in which they will be expected to teach. Some individuals who personally may prefer one orientation to another may be able to accommodate to another, provided they are apprised of the prevalent orientation before they take up their instructional responsibilities. Expecting beginning teachers to do well in an instructional setting without providing explicit information about prevalent standards for "good" or "effective" teaching is irresponsible.

Further, there should be efforts to match teachers' capabilities to the demands of their assigned instructional situation. In some instances, administrators have appeared to commit to what might be called a system of professional hazing rather than professional induction into teaching. New teachers have been assigned to teach classes that veteran teachers have wished to avoid. In departments of English, for example, this irresponsible practice has resulted in newcomers being assigned to teach five sections of composition and grammar to students who failed the course the first time they took it. Such classes frequently are filled with indifferent students who may be very difficult to manage. Given this set of circumstances, the beginning teacher may well feel that he or she has been assigned to a situation where failure looms as a very real possibility.

Fear of failure is exactly what entry-level teachers do not need. Beginners are notoriously short on self-confidence. A good experience during the first year or two of teaching can build a solid foundation for a long professional career. A bad experience, on the other hand, can set the stage for an early exit from teaching.

Concerns about the setting of practice should be incorporated in any attempt to induct newcomers into the profession of teaching. A number of issues merit consideration in areas related to the context within which teaching occurs. A sample of issues and some questions that could be addressed with respect to each are provided below. These questions might provide the bases for the preparation of checklists and other procedures that might be useful both to preservice and inservice specialists interested in the general area of evaluation of teacher performance.

QUESTIONS TO PROMPT THINKING ABOUT PROCEDURES FOR EVALUATING INDUCTION PROCESSES AS THEY RELATE TO THE CONDITIONS OF PRACTICE

Area of Concern: Teachers' Participation in Decision-Making

1. What specific new information is provided to new teachers regarding how decisions are made about changing programs, policies, and procedures?
2. What specific new information is provided to new teachers regarding how teachers in the district can influence the decision-making process?
3. What opportunities are provided to new teachers to involve them quickly in influencing the nature of decisions that might influence programs, policies, or procedures?
4. Who, specifically, is charged with providing new teachers with information in this category? What kind of system is there to assure that such information, in fact, is conveyed? (Record keeping and so forth.)

Area of Concern: Dealing with Role Conflict

1. What specific procedures are in place to provide information and counseling to beginning teachers about dealing with the conflicting roles they will play as teachers?
2. Who is in charge of providing such information and counseling?
3. What mechanisms are there to assure that such information and such counseling are made available to each new teacher? Is there a record keeping scheme that documents instances when such assistance has been provided?

Area of Concern: Student Teacher to Professional Teacher - Bridging the Gap

1. Does the principal or a designated administrator visit the classroom of each new teacher three or more times a year? Is the focus of his or her visits improvement of instruction?

2. Is a "mentor" teacher assigned to each beginning teacher to make numerous classroom observations and to provide non-judgmental feedback about instructional practices? Are such visits made at least once a month?

3. Is a specific teacher charged with familiarizing each new teacher with paper management chores associated with the teaching role? Is there an organized program for doing this, or is an experienced teacher simply told to "be sure Mr. 'X' or Ms. 'Y' understands how things are done here"?

4. Are regular meetings scheduled at least once a month by building administrators with all beginning teachers for the purpose of providing them with psychological support and listening to their concerns?

5. Are there inservice programs specifically directed to audiences of first-year and second-year teachers?

6. What mechanisms are available to share files of teacher-prepared materials and other resources with new teachers?

7. To what extent are there systematic attempts to familiarize new teachers with the local community, particularly areas from which youngsters in the school come?

8. What kinds of documents or other accountability procedures are there to assure that issues raised in items "1" through "7" have been addressed?

Area of Concern. The School or Program's View of What Constitutes Quality Teaching

1. Has the school, department, or faculty thought through and committed to paper a description of its general orientation regarding the "proper" outcomes of instruction?

2. What procedures are there to inform new teachers of this orientation?

3. Is there a system for determining the likely "fit" between a prospective teacher and the orientation of the program in which he or she will be expected to teach?

4. Is there a procedure for informing personnel officials regarding the orientation of the school and program so they can use this information when they interview and screen candidates?

5. What kind of accountability procedures are that to assure that responses to issues raised in items "1" through "4" are being addressed?

Area of Concern: Instructional Assignments of Beginners

1. Are beginning teachers consistently assigned to teach classes in subject areas they have prepared to teach?

2. Are beginning teachers assigned to teach courses that tend to include students who, generally, are regarded as at least as easy to work with as those typifying the total population of students served by the department?

3. Is every effort made to assure that beginning teachers are assigned to teach courses where there is a legitimate chance for them to succeed?

4. What records are kept to verify that beginning teachers regularly are assigned to appropriate instructional settings?

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